

ON THE QUESTION OF THE UZBEK NATION'S IDENTIFICATION

Özbek Milletinin Tanımlaması Üzerine

Armida NAZARYAN*

Öz: Özbekler denilen büyük, modern Orta Asya halkı, birkaç etnik topluluğun bir mozaikini temsil eder. Özbekistan halkının bugünkü temsilcilerinin, 15-16. yüzyıllar Özbeklerinden çok farklı olduğu teyit edebilirsiniz. Modern Özbek ulusu heterojendir ve ülke yerlilerinin görünümü görsel olarak Türk, Moğol, ya da İran kavimlerine ait olduğuna dair tanıklık etmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: heterojen kavimler, kabileler, bozkır sakinleri, topluluk, köken, millet.

Abstract: One of the largest modern Central Asian ethnos, called the Uzbeks, represents a conglomerate of several ethnic communities. We can confirm that the present representatives of the titular nation of Uzbekistan differ greatly from the Uzbeks of the 15-16th centuries. The modern Uzbek nation is heterogeneous – the appearance of its natives visually testifies to their belonging to the Turk, Mongol, or Iranian ethnos.

Keywords: ethnos, heterogeneous, tribes, steppe's inhabitants, descendants, community, origin, nation.

* Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages Samarkand, Uzbekistan

INTRODUCTION

There are various opinions on the origin of the Uzbeks but none of the researchers denies the presence of the above-mentioned components. If applied to history it is easily noticeable that for the past centuries the meaning of the ethnonym has it has been subjected to changes.

A hundred years ago when Turkestan was under Russian jurisdiction, the Russian administration regarded this ethnonym as direct descendants of the nomadic tribes that at one time populated the steppes of Dashti-Kipchak. By the beginning of the 16th century those constantly migrating tribes had penetrated into Maverannakhr together with the troops of Sheibani-khan and settled there.

There is a hypothesis that states that the name for the ethnitye steppe's inhabitants of Mongol descent, takes its origin from the name of Genghis-khan's elder son, the ninth ruler from Juchi kin, Uzbek-khan (1312-1340). This statesman had been ruling over Golden Horde for 28 years. He was the first from his kin who had established Islam on the dependent territory and is supposed to have enjoyed great popularity among people, as a result of his ability to maneuver among the mighty.

Striving to resemble their ruler and being at least indirectly concerned with his fame, part of Golden Horde's population started naming themselves "Uzbeks".

Narrating about the wars of Uzbek-khan, the Iranian historian of the 14th century Khamdallah Kazvini, calls his homeland (Golden Horde) "the Uzbek state". This term was preserved under the descendants of Uzbek-khan – Urus-khan and Edigey. Later however, this term began to be applied to the other territory inhabited by the tribes of White Horde. By the middle of the 15th century the steppes between Ural and Syrdarya's lower riches had formed the united state that got the official name - Uzbek Ulus. This event had taken place a whole century later after Uzbek-khan death.

Gradually, the Turk-Mongol tribes began to be called by the term "the Uzbeks". The rulers of those tribes often demonstrated their predilection for Mongol steppe law (Yassa), but at the same time they acted in accordance with the Islamic canons. Such a dualism was very characteristic of both Abdulkhair-khan and his grandson Sheibani who conquered the territory of Maverannakhr and founded his own state there. We should take into account however, that nomadic Uzbeks of Dashti-Kipchak who had come there together with Sheibani-khan, represented only a small aspect of the formation of Central Asia ethnos. Further to this, other Turk, Mongol, and Turk-Mongol tribes joined that group.

During the pre-Sheibanid times, the Timurid dynasty reigned in Maverannakhr. The population consisted mainly of Persian-speaking tribes. Nevertheless, the part of Turk tribes with the tinge of Mongol elements was rather

considerable. The Mongols appeared to there in the 13th century when Genghis-khan had subdued Maverannakhr. They were in part, either gradually subjected to turkification or just became assimilated. This region was ruled by Genghis-khan's son, Chaggatai. Hence the local population got the name "chaggatais", regardless of their ethnic background. After the victory of Sheibani-khan over the Timurids, the word "chaggatai" became the opposite of the term "Uzbek". Only centuries later they intersected with one another, but these two ethnoses have only found their authentic identity only in the Soviet period- the second half of the 20th century.

The third component of the modern Uzbek nation are the so-called Sarts. Science still does not possess a common opinion about their etno-genesis and identity. Some orientalists consider the Sarts – a separate ethnos, others doubt in their ethnic definiteness. (Under the name "sart" they imply the settled inhabitants of that region- Uzbeks and Tadjiks). The third group define them as people formed from a Uzbek-Tadjik blend.

The first Russian census held in 1897, fixed the Sarts as separate ethnic unit like the Uzbeks, the Tadjiks, or the Kirghizes. During the period of national delimitation in 1924 however, the name "Sarts" was withdrawn from usage in accordance with the resolution of the Soviet administration. The part of region's population that called themselves "Sarts" simply became Uzbeks.

Without going into details, the Sarts had still been the category more social than ethnic. They seem to have taken their origin either from the Uzbeks of Dashti-Kipchak who turned into settled way of life, or from the Chaggatais, lost their tribal membership; or else their ancestors were Tadjiks.

The urban population of Central Asia was involved in trade, crafts and the middle echelons of administration were called 'Sarts'. Ministers of religion and policemen were among them as well. According to their mentality, initiative and even appearance the Sarts were very similar to Persian-speaking population of the region, the Tadjiks.

Being associated with Tadjiks, the Sarts were perceived as a part of a population conquered by Turks. If the Uzbeks had already possessed national-historic symbols, the Sarts could refer themselves neither to Timurids nor to Sheibanids. Thus they were a community of people without own national sacred possessions, objects of national pride and somehow without history itself. So, the Uzbeks of Dashti-Kipchak and Chaggatai's Turks who owned some symbolic capital had rather favorable conditions for the formation of a more precise Uzbek identity.

REFERENCES

Ethnic Atlas of Uzbekistan. Open Society Institute - Assistance Foundation, 2002.

РЕМПЕЛЬ, Л.И. (1987). Цепь времен. Т.